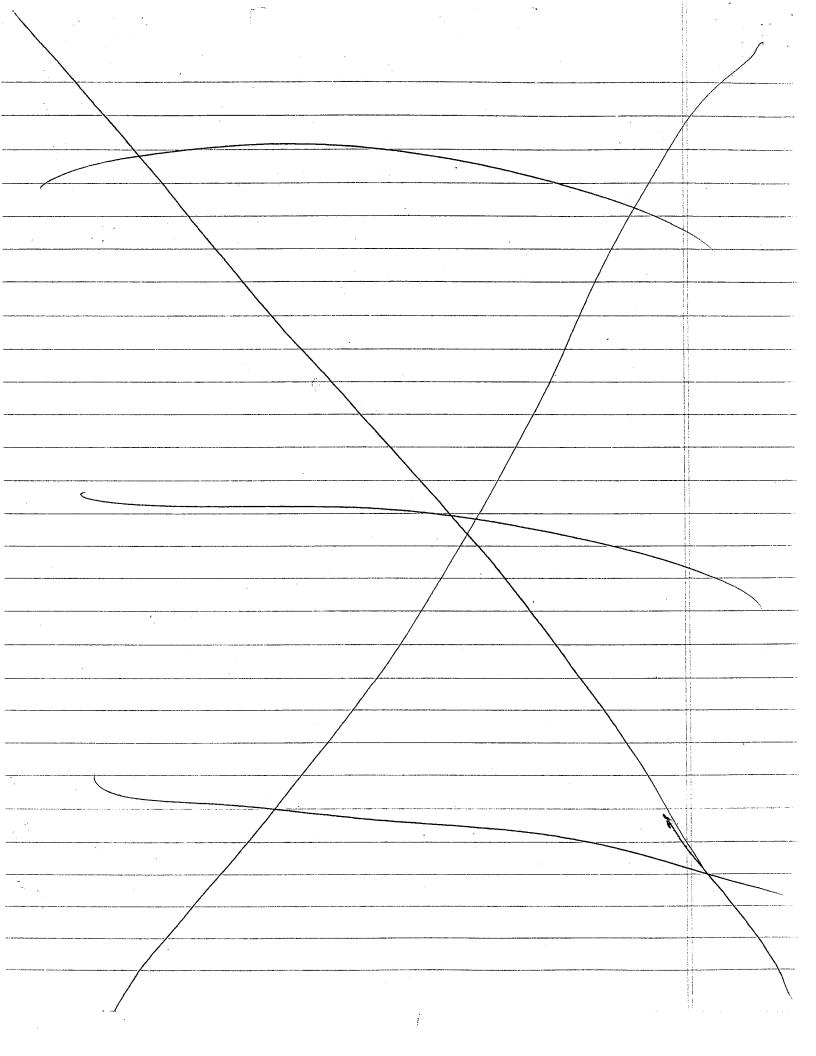
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Al-Caeda has many tentacles but one of them has been cut off. Sho the White Properspokesman American investigators booked forward for questioning Abu-Zubaydahrabour his ency-clopaedic knowledge of the phobal network. There is no question but that having an opportunity to visit with him as helpful asaid Ponald Rumsfeld Sometimes Funderstate for emphasis the added daily.

The celebrations at Abu Zubaydah's arrest were tempered by the sobering confirmation that the terror network was still active and still using the tried and tested formula which had been so successful in the past. A Pakistani man with fake business cards and a plausible story had found the house in Faisalabad. He paid a generous deposit and the first month's rent up-front in exchange for a year's lease, much as Mohamed Atta had done in Hamburg. It's a peaceful area and it's just my luck that I had to rent it out to al-Qaeda,' said Shaheen Kauser, the travel agent who owned the house. Her words had a familiar ring; Thorsten Albrecht, the German estate agent who rented 54 Marienstrasse to Atta and his friends, had said much the same. Zubaydah's group had slipped up, however, when

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A Section

Prosecution of Moussaoui Nears a Crossroad; Facing Demands for Witness Testimony, Government May Turn Suspect Over to U.S. Military Susan Schmidt Washington Post Staff Writer

The criminal case against accused Sept. 11 conspirator Zacarias Moussaoui is nearing a crossroad, with decisions in the upcoming weeks that could determine whether he will remain in the federal court system or be turned over to the U.S. military as an enemy combatant.

The government's case has been complicated by Moussaoui's interest in calling as a defense witness Ramzi Binalshibh, self-described coordinator of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Officials say allowing Moussaoui's defense to question Binalshibh or other al Qaeda members would create a host of problems, including disrupting their own interrogations and providing al Qaeda a potential platform in a U.S. court of law.

The outcome of the case as it plays out before U.S. District Judge Leonie M. Brinkema could have ramifications for future prosecutions of alleged terrorists in which both sides seek to call detainees as witnesses. Already, both the defense and prosecution in the Seattle trial of accused al Qaeda collaborator James Ujaama are expressing frustration with the Pentagon's reluctance to allow interviews of Guantanamo Bay prisoners who are considered less important than Binalshibh.

Given the fundamental right of the accused to call witnesses who might help with their defense, future defendants likely will want to call some of the hundreds of al Qaeda and Taliban captives held abroad, government officials said. How to preserve the intelligence value of those detainees, limit their communications and give defendants access to witnesses is the conundrum posed by the Moussaoui case.

With both sides preparing for Moussaoui's death penalty trial in June, the witness issue must be resolved soon. A closed-door hearing is scheduled for next week if a resolution is not reached before then.

"We are fast approaching a point where some kind of decision will be

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made in this case," said Frank W. Dunham Jr., the federal public defender serving as standby attorney for Moussaoui, who is representing himself. Dunham, who declined to comment on the upcoming hearing, said he had "no clue" whether Moussaoui would remain a defendant in Alexandria federal court or be given the more uncertain status of a military detainee.

Brinkema has barred attorneys involved in the case from discussing some of the pretrial proceedings. Justice Department officials said only that they continue to prepare for trial.

"It really is a Pandora's box of unanswered constitutional, political and intelligence questions," former U.S. attorney Joseph E. DiGenova said.

Binalshibh was captured last fall in Pakistan and turned over to the CIA. Held in a secret location, he is undergoing questioning that intelligence experts said could take months or years.

Sources said Binalshibh has told interrogators that Moussaoui met with the mastermind of the Sept. 11 plot, Khalid Sheik Mohammed, in Afghanistan in the winter of 2000 and that Mohammed provided him with names of contacts in the United States. Binalshibh has told interrogators that he met with Moussaoui as well, and wired him money to advance the Sept. 11 plot. While those statements could hurt Moussaoui's defense, Binalshibh has also told interrogators that he and Mohammed ultimately lost confidence in Moussaoui's discretion and decided to use him in the hijack plot only as a last resort, the sources said.

Moussaoui has stated in court that he is an al Qaeda member but has denied being part of the Sept. 11 plot.

Legal experts said that under the Classified Information Procedures Act, the judge might seek to review intelligence reports of Binalshibh's interrogations and decide whether he would provide Moussaoui relevant exculpatory evidence. She could decide that he would not, and refuse to allow Moussaoui to call him, allowing the prosecution to go forward.

But the military and the CIA may not want to provide the information, as has occurred behind closed doors in the Ujaama case. "There's a tense negotiation going on," Ujaama prosecutor Andrew Hamilton told the court last month, according to a hearing transcript, now sealed, that was quoted by the Seattle Post-Intelligencer newspaper. "It's very frustrating to us. And what we're told is that the whole system has changed since 9/11."

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Brinkema may decide that the defense should have its own opportunity to weigh Binalshibh's value. "She could order Binalshibh's deposition taken by a lawyer for Moussaoui," said Plato Cacheris, a defense lawyer with long experience in national security cases.

But a federal judge last year refused to allow attorneys for John Walker Lindh, a U.S. citizen captured in Afghanistan while fighting alongside the Taliban militia, to interview prisoners at the U.S. Navy prison in Guantanamo, saying they must instead rely on government interrogators to ask questions for them. But even that would publicly reveal whether witnesses are answering interrogators' questions, information the military generally does not want known. Lindh pleaded guilty and is now serving a 20-year sentence.

Moussaoui's case poses greater national security challenges. The whereabouts of Binalshibh and other top al Qaeda captives remain secret. It is not known whether Binalshibh has been "renditioned," or turned over to another country's intelligence service for questioning, as have an unknown number of al Qaeda captives. That raises questions about whether he is in U.S. custody.

Pentagon lawyers have vigorously fought efforts to allow access to attorneys for two prisoners held by the military as enemy combatants. In the case of U.S. citizen Jose Padilla, who allegedly scouted U.S. sites for a radiological, or "dirty bomb," attack, they have argued in part that access to an attorney would disrupt interrogators, who try to gain information from captives in part by creating a carefully controlled psychological dependency.

It is also unclear how prosecutors would be able to comply with federal rules requiring them to disclose exculpatory information to the defendant. "Does the military have to turn it over? Does the Justice Department even know what they have?" wondered Eugene M. Propper, who served as a prosecutor in the case stemming from the 1976 assassination in Washington of former Chilean foreign minister Orlando Letelier and his aide, Ronni Moffitt.

"This whole war on terrorism is such a new thing because secrecy is so important," Propper said. "We are really operating in uncharted waters."

Even if Brinkema finds that Moussaoui is entitled to some access to Binalshibh, the government might refuse to make him available. "The judge cannot force the production of a witness in a case like this, but she can dismiss the case," DiGenova said.

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If that happens, the Bush administration is expected to declare Moussaoui an enemy combatant and turn him over to the U.S. military. He could be held indefinitely or brought to trial beforea military commission. The Pentagon is finalizing rules for the commissions, which are expected to begin soon for at least a handful of the alleged Taliban and al Qaeda members now held by the military in Guantanamo Bay.

Moussaoui, a French citizen arrested in Minnesota, might challenge the transfer to military custody, but recent court rulings have backed the government's designation of Padilla and Yaser Esam Hamdi, also a U.S. citizen, as enemy combatants, after it showed evidence of their links to al Qaeda.

Dunham, Moussaoui's standby attorney, said he is not sure that Moussaoui would be any worse off in a military court than he is facing a death penalty case in Virginia. "I don't have an opinion either way about whether he is better off in a tribunal or in court. It's impossible to tell until you see what the tribunal rules are," he said, noting that the Pentagon is still drawing up the elements of crimes that the commissions would consider.

Dunham has his own view about how to resolve the witness issue. "The national security concerns in this case would be eased considerably if the government didn't insist on the death penalty," he said. In a capital case, he added, the defense must pursue every possible fact. In the penalty phase of such cases, defendants are given wide latitude to bring in witnesses whose testimony would not be considered relevant at trial on the issue of guilt or innocence.

But Cacheris said the government would not gain anything by dropping the death penalty. "If he's entitled to the evidence -- whether or not there's a death penalty -- he's entitled to the evidence," he said.

---- INDEX REFERENCES ----

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